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Parent Focus

December 2004

Language Development

by Merv Blunt, Central Office

"Everyone has something to communicate." That is one of the nine Beliefs Statements of State Schools for Severely Handicapped (SSSH) and one of the graduate goals for all our students. A student's ability to communicate is an extremely important component of the student's essential life skills.

There are two major components to language development — **receptive language** and **expressive language**.

In typically developing children, understanding what is said and talking develops almost at the same time, and we don't even realize it is happening. However, generally for students with disabilities, the more severe the student's disability, the greater the time between developing an understanding of the message and the ability to use the message.

Receptive language is the understanding of what was said, and an appropriate response might be an action — gestural, behavioral, pictorial or written. This means the person understands or comprehends what was communicated and responds to it. Examples would be: getting something he was told to get, doing an activity, putting something away, following a pictorial recipe or following a visual schedule.

Expressive language is the act of conveying an idea or thought to another person and can take many forms — verbal, gestural, behavioral, pictorial, electronic or written. Examples would be: making a choice between two items, putting together the visual schedule, asking a question or expressing emotions by actions rather than words. All of these ideas or thoughts can be communicated either verbally or nonverbally by signing, pointing to pictures, using a voice output device or using behaviors and gestures.

Developing an understanding of language is the first step in language development. The student must understand and comprehend what is said before he or she can use it to express or convey an idea or thought.

If you tell a child to get a cup, and the child gets it, that is receptive language. If a student wants a drink of water, gets a cup, and takes it to you, then that is expressive language. Students cannot tell you they want a drink if they don't understand the purpose of a cup.

One of the most important considerations when selecting a communication skill to teach a student is whether the skill is one the student will value and use. Many times we wonder why the student has difficulty understanding or communicating something to others. We must ask ourselves: "Is this skill of value or of use to the student?" If it isn't, then the student will have great difficulty accomplishing the communication goal. Sometimes we either assume the communication skill is appropriate because other students are learning it, or we see it as a simple skill when it is really very complex.

For an example in receptive language of when most students are learning the skill but we might question the value of the skill for a particular student, consider the following skill: "The student will recognize five different colors." Typically, knowing the different colors is an important concept for students in the public school. But is it an essential skill for our students? For some students at SSSH, this would be an appropriate goal; for others, the concept of colors is something that they will not use very often.

As an example in expressive language of a simple skill that is actually complex for some students, we might decide that a good skill for the student would be to answer "yes" and "no" questions. On the surface, this would seem like an appropriate skill for all SSSH students. It also appears to be a very simple goal; the answer is either yes or no. However, this can be an extremely complex goal. There are many types of yes/no questions, and the student may not have developed all the receptive skills needed to respond to yes/no questions. Take the following yes/no questions as an example.

- Asking for an opinion: Do you like this? Did you have a good time at school?

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- Asking for identification: Is this a spoon?
- Asking about feelings: Are you sleepy? Are you feeling OK?
- Asking if you want to do something: Do you want to play? Do you want to go to the store?

As you can see, simple yes/no questions can become very complicated. So a good skill for a student would be to take just one section of the yes/no questions, such as identification, and teach it first before we add other types of yes/no questions.

All SSSH students will need many opportunities to understand a message before we can expect them to express the message. Even then, they will need many opportunities to practice their responses before we can start asking them questions and getting responses. This can be a slow process, but we should not become discouraged by the amount of time students need to develop communication skills. The more a student is able to communicate, the more opportunities are available to the student. ■

Parent Focus

December 2004

State Schools for
Severely Handicapped
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480
Gary Schroer, Superintendent



The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education complies with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the Americans With Disabilities Act. Services are provided without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or physical or mental disability.

Information concerning other available resources, programs, etc., is not to be construed as an endorsement by State Schools for Severely Handicapped for any specific product, organization or philosophy.



Quick and Easy Ways to Improve Receptive Language

★ Tired of playing 20 questions at the refrigerator?

Place magnetic pictures of a couple of your child's favorite foods on the refrigerator. Each time you get the food out of the refrigerator, show your child the picture. Your child will start to see the connection between the picture and the food. Do not start asking the child any questions yet — he needs to learn the association between the picture and the food. After this is established, before the child is given the food, help him hand you the picture. After a while, wait to see if your child will reach for and give you the picture. If successful, then your child understands the picture stands for a specific food item. (Make sure that the food is available in the refrigerator before you post the picture; the student will not understand the purpose of the picture if you are not able to give him the favorite food.)

★ Let your child want to know what is for dinner each night

Put a series of pictures on the refrigerator or on the counter that show all the foods that will be served at dinner that night. You don't have to have the exact picture for each food item. A picture of meat could mean a variety of meats. This way the child will be improving receptive language, and later, she can tell you she wants more of something by pointing to the picture. A good picture source is grocery store ads.

★ Using communication notebooks between school and home

On occasion, rather than just writing in your communication notebook about what you and your child did last night, put a picture in the book to describe what happened. It might be necessary to write a little information under the picture. For instance, put a picture of grandma in the notebook saying she came to visit last night, or put in a picture of the store and the item you and your child bought there. Rather than just having your child hand the teacher the notebook with writing in it, the child can be more involved in telling the teacher what went on the night before. At the same time, you are building the child's receptive language.

This would also be a good way for the teacher to periodically communicate with the parents instead of only writing what happened during the day or week.

★ Your child becomes impatient when you run errands

Put together a series of pictures of the errands you are going to run. Each time you complete an errand, have your child take the picture and put it in a "finished" box or wallet. Make sure the last picture is of your home and/or the reinforcement. This visual schedule lets your child know what is next and how many more errands you have to do before you either return home and/or he gets the reinforcement. ■

Summer Camps for All Ages

by Stephanie Brooks,
Central Office

State Schools for Severely Handicapped

"Beliefs"

1. All children can learn.
2. All learning can be measured.
3. Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
4. Educators have the ability to influence community attitudes regarding people with disabilities.
5. All skills, teaching materials and instructional settings must be consistent with the student's chronological age and functional to the person outside of the school setting.
6. Everyone has something to communicate.
7. All behavior serves a purpose.
8. A person is more than his or her disability.
9. Parents and educators play a critical role in the lives of children.

In the middle of a Missouri winter, it may be hard to think about next summer, but that's what you need to do if you are interested in having your child attend one of the summer camps that welcome the developmentally disabled. Some camps have registration deadlines of April or May. Some camps are so popular you may have a better chance of being selected if you send in an early registration.

You can download background information and registration forms from the camps' Web sites or contact the camp by phone or mail to have an information pack sent to you.

These camps offer typical summer camp activities such as swimming, canoeing, fishing, horseback riding, arts and crafts, dances and cookouts. The camps are accessible and have staff who are able to take care of medical concerns. Staff-to-camper ratios are low and generally range from 1:1 to 1:4.

The costs of the camps vary significantly. Because the Regional Centers have very limited funds, here are some ideas for funding:

- Ask the camp if they can provide a scholarship.
- Contact Camps for Kids for funding. The mission of this organization is to raise funds to send low-income and special needs children to camp. Their Web site is www.campsforkids.org. For information, contact Zee Peters at (816) 559-4622.
- Ask your Regional Center service coordinator to put you in contact with local organizations providing scholarships.
- Consider fundraising through your church or other local group. At least one Independent Living Center has hosted a fundraiser to assist with camp fees.

For parents with students reaching graduation age, note that some camps provide programs for adults. Keep this list for future reference.

Camp Barnabas — South of Monett (*Southwest Missouri Area*)

Route 2, Box 131, Purdy, MO 65734 • (417) 476-2565 • www.campbarnabas.org

2005 Calendar:

June 1-7, 2005 Developmentally Disabled ages 18 and up (*Adult Week*)

June 17-23, 2005 Autism/Developmentally Disabled ages 7 to 15

July 23-29, 2005 Autism/Developmentally Disabled ages 16 to 25

Fees: Registration fee of \$35 payable by all campers. Tuition is \$460 per week. All needing scholarships will receive one — no child is turned away for lack of ability to pay.

Note: Except for the first week above, siblings are welcome at this camp to give parents a chance to be by themselves for a week.

Camp Black Hawk and Camp Carpe Diem — near Rolla (*Mid-Missouri Area*)

16795 Hwy. E, Rolla, MO 65401 • (573) 458-2125 • www.bearriverranch.com

Both camps offer these sessions: Three sessions in late July and early August.

One is for adults 30 and over; one for teens and adults over 17; and one for ages 5 to 21.

Fees: Camp Black Hawk is about \$660 per session, and Camp Carpe Diem is about \$960.

The nonrefundable deposit is \$100. The full fee or funding approval is required by April 30. For funding assistance, families in St. Louis County can contact the Recreation Council at (314) 726-6044 to see if they are eligible for limited funding (families are expected to cover \$110 of the fee). Also contact your Regional Center Service Coordinator at the Department of Mental Health for funding options.

Note: Transportation is provided between St. Louis and the camps, leaving from Kohl's Department Store (270 and Olive) and Steak and Shake (44 and 141) for \$10 each way. The buses are air-conditioned and have lifts.

Miracle Hills Ranch – Camp Angels — near Bethany (*Northwest Missouri Area*)

(660) 425-2277; 1-866-677-1359 • www.hopemissionsoutreach.org • hmomhr@grundyec.net

Session: One week in early June is set aside for developmentally and physically challenged people ages 13 and older.

Fees: About \$200 for the week.

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Sunnyhill Adventures — near Dittmer (*Southwest of St. Louis on Hwy 30*)

6555 Sunlit Way, Dittmer, MO 63023 • (636) 274-9044; (314) 781-4950 •

www.sunnyhilladventures.org

Sessions: One week in late June and one week in early August — both open to ages 8 to 17. Throughout June, July and August, there are one-week camps for adults.

Fees: The fee varies based on the staff-to-camper ratio. Approximately \$385 to \$795 for the youth camps and \$550 to \$795 for the adult camps. This camp is open to the same funding noted above for camps Black Hawk and Carpe Diem. A deposit of \$75 is required with registration. Full payment or confirmation of funding is required 30 days before the camp session.

Wonderland Camp — near Rocky Mount (*on Lake of the Ozarks*)

18591 Miller Circle, Rocky Mount, MO 65072 • (573) 392-1000 • www.wonderlandcamp.org

Sessions: Six-day sessions are held from late May through mid-August and generally are open to all ages. Registration deadline is May 1 each year.

Fees: The fee is about \$325, and there is a nonrefundable deposit of \$150. The balance is due before camp starts, and the camp will accept funding from the sources noted above. The camp can provide some scholarships to assist with fees.

For students with autism/Asperger's Syndrome

Camp Determination — Linwood, Kansas (*West of Bonner Springs*)

Operated by the Autism Asperger Resource Center, 3901 Rainbow Boulevard,

Kansas City, KS 66160 • www.autismasperger.org • theaarc@msn.com

Contact Dr. Kaye Otten at (913) 588-3896 to discuss your child's abilities and whether the camp would be appropriate. The camp accommodates campers with severe autism.

Sessions: One in late June and one in late July. Deadline for registration is April 1. Places are assigned by lottery if necessary.

Fees: The fee is \$650 with no application fee. There are limited scholarship funds available.

For students with epilepsy

Camp Shing — Linwood, Kansas (*West of Bonner Springs*)

Operated by the Epilepsy Foundation of Kansas and Western Missouri, 6550 Troost Ave, Suite B, Kansas City, MO 64131-1266 • (816) 444-2800 or 1-800-972-5163 •

www.epilepsyfoundation.org

Sessions: There is one session from June 10-12, 2005. Children ages 6 through 17 with epilepsy/seizure disorders and their families are invited to participate. The camp can accommodate developmentally disabled campers provided a parent also attends. For more information, call Deb Barbour at (816) 444-2800, ext. 23, or e-mail dbarbour@efha.org.

Fees: The fee is \$75 for the first camper and \$25 for each additional family member. ■

Shirt Covers (an alternative to bibs)

by Janelle Burch,
Supervisor for Instruction

Recycling T-shirts and sweatshirts has proven a successful alternative to using bibs, aprons or towels for clothing protection for your child. It gives the appearance of a regular shirt while providing protection from food spills while eating. If you have ever felt hesitant using a bib on your child at a restaurant, this idea can be helpful to you and will allow your child more dignity.

Alter the T-shirt or sweatshirt to make it easy to put on and take off without pulling it over the child's head. It should be easy to put on after you are seated in the restaurant and easy to remove quickly when you are ready to leave. If you need extra absorbency, sew a towel on the underneath side of the front of the shirt.

Directions are as follows:

1. Using a sweatshirt or T-shirt, cut down the back from the neck to the bottom of the shirt.
2. Hem each side to prevent raveling.
3. Place Velcro on both sides down the back of the shirt at the neck, middle and hem.
4. Decorate the front with an age-appropriate design, or choose shirts with pictures, designs and colors that will match most of the clothing worn by your child. ■

Basic Literacy Skills and Activities

by Merv Blunt, Central Office

- 1 Have your child do everything in a left-to-right progression.**
 - This encourages the child to look at books in the correct order, from left to right.
 - This also shows your child how to turn pages in the book.
- 2 Provide the child with a variety of reading materials such as picture books, storybooks, activity books, song and rhyming books, magazines and newspaper ads.**
 - Your child needs to recognize that a variety of types of reading material exists.
 - By having access to all these types of materials, the child may find a type of book or print material she likes.
- 3 Read to your child daily.**
 - Even if your child will sit and look at a picture or page in a book for only a few seconds, point to a picture in the book or read a couple of words.
 - Your child is still getting the literacy experience.
- 4 Read materials yourself, and let your child see you do this.**
 - This shows your child that reading is fun and useful.
 - Involve your child in your reading; occasionally show him a picture that is in what you are reading.
 - Show your child a picture of prepared food in the recipe section of the newspaper, then make it for dinner.
- 5 Encourage print recognition in everyday situations — for example, recognizing labels, the golden arches at McDonald's, or signs such as a stop sign.**
 - These are important skills for your child. When you and your child are out in the community, point out the various signs and labels that appear.
 - Eventually, the child will recognize the sign or label, especially if it is something she enjoys or wants.
- 6 Use books with photographs, which usually make it easier for the child to make the association between the picture and the meaning.**
 - Photographs are not as abstract as some illustrations and are easier for your child to understand if the photo shows a simple picture of an item or person.
 - Some photos have too much detail, and your child may not be able to focus on the specific item or person.
- 7 Talk to your child about the pictures in the book and what is happening in the picture.**
 - You don't have to read every sentence in the book. Show your child the page, briefly describe what is happening, then go on to the next page.
 - If your child has a short attention span, you can summarize the picture and words on the page in a couple of words and then go to the next page.
- 8 Read a book over and over to the child if he enjoys it.**
 - If your child likes a certain book or certain type of book, such as SpongeBob SquarePants books, read the book as many times as possible to your child.
 - This will help your child get the rhythm of reading and also begin anticipating what will happen next.



Students Win First Place in Art Show

by Kerri Henderson, Joyce Harrison and Connie Willis, Bootheel State School



The Delta Fair is an annual event in Kennett, Mo. It dates back to 1891 when it was known as the Dunklin County Farmers and Breeders Fair Association. From Sept. 28 to Oct. 2, 2004, the Delta Fair welcomed visitors from Southeast Missouri and Northeast Arkansas. As in years past, the fair's emphasis was on agriculture, career, family, food and a very large art show.

Each year the Delta Fair has an afternoon that is called the State School Fair Day when rides and admission are free to the students and the adult chaperones during school hours. Our students at Bootheel State School look forward each year to going to the fair. The food, fun and rides make that day truly enjoyable. Many of our parents meet us at the fairgrounds and help with their child.

Every year that I have taught at Bootheel, my class has entered the art show. This year is the first time in eight years that every student in my class received a 1st-place ribbon! You can imagine how excited we were when we went to the art show on Sept. 29, 2004. There was some celebrating going on! The Delta Fair Art Show is our first stop when we go to the fair. Everyone is usually happy after visiting the art show because they always get a ribbon, even if it's an honorable mention. This year ... well, to be honest, there was hoopin' and hollerin'.

So, a great big congratulations to my entire class on their 1st-place ribbons. Way to go, guys! ■

Advocating for Your Child in the IEP Process

Your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed at the IEP team meeting. This is the time for you to share your ideas and concerns about your child's education. School personnel will contact you about the IEP meeting; you may receive either a written notice or a phone call about the meeting. You will be notified early enough to ensure that you can attend the meeting. The meeting should be scheduled at a time and place agreeable to you and school personnel. You are entitled to have anyone you select who is familiar with your child present at the meeting. The team may be made up of yourself, your child (if appropriate), the classroom teacher, the school principal, a representative of the local education agency who is familiar with special education, and possibly others such as therapists, nurses, home school coordinators, and case managers from various agencies. IEPs must be reviewed and revised at least once a year. You may request an IEP meeting during the year if you think changes are needed, and school personnel may call an IEP meeting for the same reason.

Knowing What Will be Discussed in the IEP Meeting

If you are aware of the contents of the IEP, you can prepare your questions and concerns in advance. All IEPs must address:

- Your child's present level of performance.
- Goals that relate to your child's needs and that your child can reasonably be expected to learn during the year the IEP covers. The IEP must indicate how the goals will be measured and how progress toward the goals will be reported.
- Needs for related services, such as physical and speech therapy, and the frequency and duration of each service.
- How your child will participate in statewide assessments.
- Not later than age 14, transition services, which focus on your child's needs when he graduates from school.
- Behavioral Support Plan (if needed) to outline positive behavioral interventions.
- Whether your child is eligible to attend extended school year (ESY).

How to Prepare for an IEP Meeting

- Review what must be contained in the IEP, and consider how each of these points affects your child.
- Gather information about your child that will be helpful at the meeting, such as reports from school, your observations or doctors' reports.

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- If your child is already in school, you may want to observe her in the classroom. You will need to call the school office to schedule a time.
- Watch and record your child's behavior at home.
- Write down what your child can and cannot do, likes and dislikes, and how your child interacts with other children and family members.
- Find out what your child's feelings are regarding home, school and friends.
- Keep records of your child's work, parent conferences and progress reports. Use this information to monitor your child's progress and to prepare for future IEP meetings.
- Check the IEP notice to determine who will be attending the meeting. Call school personnel with any questions you have about this meeting.
- Notify school personnel as soon as possible if you will not be able to attend the meeting as scheduled. Try to arrange for a meeting that is convenient to everyone.

Questions You May Want to Ask During the IEP Meeting

- What do the tests and observations show about my child?
- What are my child's strengths?
- Are the evaluation results the same or different from what the teacher observes about my child?
- Is integration at the local school district with nondisabled peers appropriate for my child?
- What goals are realistic for my child?
- How do these goals lead to my child's future plans for adult living and work?
- How will my child's progress be measured and reported to me?
- Is there a need for supplemental aids or services?
- How can I help at home with my child's educational program?
- Is my child ready to participate in the development of his IEP?
- Does my child need a Positive Behavioral Support plan?
- Does my child need assistive technology?

How to Deal With Concerns About Your Child's Education Program

When you have questions or concerns about your child's educational program, talk with the staff at the school. You should first discuss your concerns with your child's teacher. You may refer your concerns to the school principal.

If you are unable to resolve your concerns at the local school level, you should call your area director. The phone number for the area office is available from the school.

In the event contacting the school and area office does not resolve the situation, you may call Central Office.

You also have the option of contacting either of these offices for assistance:

Special Education Compliance Section

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Telephone: (573) 751-0699

TTY: 1-800-735-2966

Missouri Parents Act (MPACT)

Telephone: 1-800-743-7634

TTY: 1-800-743-7634 ■



RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Missouri Regional Centers

*by Stephanie Brooks,
Central Office*

For more information on the Regional Centers, visit the Department of Mental Health Web site at www.dmh.missouri.gov/mrdd/, or call the department toll-free at 1-800-364-9687 or TTY (573) 526-1201.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health's Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MRDD) serves those with developmental disabilities such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy and brain injuries. The condition must have been in place before the age of 22 and be expected to continue indefinitely. All students enrolled in a State Schools for Severely Handicapped (SSSH) facility have disabilities that would make them eligible for services through this division.

Services are coordinated through Regional Centers located throughout Missouri in Albany, Columbia, Hannibal, Joplin, Kansas City, Kirksville, Poplar Bluff, Rolla, Sikeston, Springfield and two facilities in St. Louis. Applying to the nearest Regional Center to have your child's eligibility determined is voluntary, but the SSSH home school coordinators strongly suggest that you have this determination made even if you are not in need of services at this time. It takes about 30 to 45 days to have a child determined eligible. SSSH can assist the Regional Center by providing copies of your child's psychological evaluations and other supporting documents after you sign a release for this information. Once eligible, a service coordinator will be assigned to your child and can act as a case manager to help you obtain a variety of services or place your child on a waiting list for popular services. If you do not use the center for some time, the file may become inactive, but it can be reactivated within a week if you need services. These services can be accessed when your child becomes an adult because the Division of MRDD serves persons of any age.

The Regional Centers have experienced significant reductions in funding recently and may be limited in what they can fund. However, service coordinators will refer you to other agencies, sponsors and sources of funding, and many will assist you in applying for help. The best service coordinators can guide you to appropriate resources whenever you need a new service. In many instances, they attend your child's IEP meetings as part of the team.

Examples of current help provided by Regional Centers:

- Personal care assistance
- Limited funding for very short-term respite care, often needed on an emergency basis — parent may have to locate a provider
- Assistance with applying for items from Medicaid (such as diapers or hearing aids)
- Adapted equipment not available through Medicaid
- Therapy not usually provided through the school (such as hippotherapy, which is horseback riding)
- Accessing funding for summer camps — the Regional Centers have extremely limited funds but can guide families to sponsors in the community who may be able to help
- Funding for behavior intervention for extreme behaviors
- Helping families organize their lives to avoid neglect complaints
- For transitioning students, some assistance with work placement, transportation needs as an adult or day activity center placement (the latter often involves joining a waiting list for an available place, which may take a year or more)
- Assistance to families from other countries, including providing interpreters for meetings and connecting families to support groups and resources they need
- Advocating for a student's needs in the education process
- Referring parents to resources for obtaining guardianship when child turns 18.

If your child's school has a home school coordinator, he or she can help you work with your service coordinator. Some home school coordinators are willing to attend a meeting with you and the service coordinator, either at the Regional Center or at the school, and they can help you explain the type of services your family needs. The home school coordinators maintain a good relationship with the intake managers and supervisors at the Regional Centers and can sometimes intervene to obtain emergency services for your family. Call your home school coordinator, and see what he or she can do to help you. ■

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Calendar of Events

MPACT Training for Parents

- Feb. 7, 2005 — *The Art of Effective Advocacy*
Room 57, 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis
9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- March 14, 2005 — *Positive Behavior Interventions*
Room 61, 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis
9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

For more details, call 1-800-743-7634, or visit their Web site at www.ptimpact.com, then choose Training.

Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

- May 19 to 21, 2005 — *Autism Symposium*
Tan-Tar-A, Osage Beach

For more details, call (573) 751-9687 or 1-800-364-9687. The workshop is helpful for parents as well as professionals in the field.

TRANSITION PLANNING

Medicaid and SSI at Age 18

by Susan Cato, Home School Coordinator, Bootheel, Crowley Ridge, Current River and Shady Grove State Schools

When a disabled individual turns 18, only their income and resources are considered in determining eligibility for Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Therefore, if your child has been ineligible for Medicaid prior to age 18 based on parental income or resources, he or she may now be eligible. You will need to contact your local Division of Family Services and help your child complete an application. Each county's Family Services Office should be listed in the phone book.

If your disabled child has previously been ineligible for SSI due to parental income and resources, you may want to contact your local Social Security Office when the child turns 18. The only income and resources considered at that time will be their own. More information can be obtained from the Social Security Administration Web site at www.ssa.gov. ■

Obtaining a Missouri Identification Card

by Stephanie Brooks, Central Office

When your child reaches 16 or older, you might want to think about getting a state identification card (or nondriver license) from the Department of Revenue. This can be obtained from any office that issues driver's licenses.

The state ID card carries a photo of the student and personal information such as the student's name and address. The card can be used in place of a driver's license for students who need to cash checks. If your child is nonverbal or cannot be easily understood, the ID would help if your child became separated from you or family members when out in the community.

To obtain the ID card, you will need to take your child to the issuing office to be photographed and to provide a signature for the card. The initial ID card requires two proofs of identity for your child. Most people provide an original U.S. birth certificate and Social Security card. Other documents are accepted including a passport, health insurance card, photo public assistance card issued by a State agency, or a non-English birth certificate. The fee is \$11. The card will expire on the child's date of birth in the sixth year after issuance and can be renewed every six years. ■

Help Protect Yourself and Others From the Flu

by Claudia Rampley,
Central Office

With limited flu vaccine, it is more important than ever to take precautions to help prevent spreading the flu.

The best ways to avoid the flu are through these common-sense measures:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer, especially if you come into contact with common areas such as door knobs, telephones, public restrooms, handles on grocery carts or wheelchairs, computer keyboards, etc.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash your hands after touching anyone who is sneezing, coughing or blowing his or her nose, or whose nose is running.
- Get plenty of rest. Overdoing it can result in a weakened immune system.
- Use disposable tissues instead of handkerchiefs to avoid spreading germs.
- Drink lots of water to protect the inner mucous linings of the respiratory tract, which can defend against cold and flu viruses.
- Avoid sharing food, eating utensils, drinking glasses, pens and pencils, towels or other personal items with others.
- Teach your children to cover their coughs and sneezes, and you do the same. Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or the inside of your elbow if a tissue is unavailable. Despite conventional wisdom, don't cover your mouth with your hand when coughing or sneezing. This increases the spread of germs as your hands touch doorknobs, computer keyboards, telephones, etc. If there is no tissue handy, today's doctors urge people, especially children, to sneeze into their sleeves.
- Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables to help your immune system fight viruses.
- Stay home when you are sick, and encourage ill colleagues to stay home and rest, too.
- Avoid shaking hands. If you can't avoid shaking hands, wash your hands immediately or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid salad bars or all-you-can-eat buffets. Plastic sneeze guards can only provide so much protection from germs. Consider the number of dirty hands that have touched the serving handles at these buffets. If you choose to go to these types of restaurants, be sure to wash and/or sanitize your hands immediately prior to eating.
- Avoid magazines in doctors' offices. Bring your own reading material.

Follow these simple measures, and you may avoid the flu this season. If you get the flu, rest in bed, drink plenty of fluids, and take medication such as Tylenol to relieve fever and discomfort.

Call your doctor if you have any signs of flu and:

- your fever lasts — you may have a more serious infection;
- you have breathing or heart problems or other serious health problems;
- you are taking drugs to fight cancer or other drugs that weaken your body's natural defenses against illness;
- you feel sick and don't seem to be getting better;
- you have a cough that begins to produce phlegm; or
- you are worried about your health.

Antibiotics are not effective against flu viruses. However, the following four drugs have been approved to treat people who get the flu:

- Amantadine (Symetrel)
- Rimantadine (Flumadine)
- Zanamivir (Relenza)
- Oseltamivir (Tamiflu)

When taken within 48 hours after the onset of illness, these drugs reduce the duration of fever and other symptoms. These drugs are only available by prescription.

Doctors and nutritionists say careful hygiene, a balanced diet, and plenty of rest and fluids can go a long way toward keeping people healthy during the flu season, especially considering the vaccine shortage. Do your part to protect yourself and others from the flu. ■

Making Pictures and Gifts With Your Photos

by Sandy Rowe, Principal,
College View and Oakview
State Schools

Try one of the Web sites listed below, and see how easy it is to get film-quality prints from your digital camera or get your film developed, then order prints and products delivered to your home. I am most familiar with the www.shutterfly.com site and enjoy the convenience it offers. When you sign up with a site, you just add digital photos to your account, then order prints or other products for family and friends at any time (day or night), and they will be mailed within a few days. Rolls of film can be mailed to these companies for developing, and then you can work with your pictures and order prints and gifts.

The sites all offer a variety of prints available in many sizes: wallet, 4 x 6, 5 x 7, and 8 x 10, to very large poster-sized. After downloading the pictures or accessing the roll that was developed, you can crop pictures, remove red-eye, and add borders and captions. Each company offers specialty items such as calendars, mugs, tote bags, greeting cards, T-shirts and mouse pads. You can order mini-albums and larger photo albums and tailor them to your family's needs. Using the mini-albums for our students gives them a personalized storybook to use for reading or for communicating with you and other friends.

Becoming a member of these sites is free, and some pictures are available free with your first order. Photos can be shared online with friends and family; they can view pictures and order prints for themselves. The sites offer photo storage, so you can use stored pictures later to compile an album or a calendar of your family's activities. With the Shutterfly membership comes a free online newsletter filled with savings, digital tips and news.

Check out these sites and others offering similar services:

- Shutterfly: www.shutterfly.com
- Snapfish: www.snapfish.com
- Clark Color labs: www.clarkcolor.com ■

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q: Why does the school require the physician to indicate the P.E. program for a student on the physical exam form rather than accepting the parent's instructions?

A: The State Schools for Severely Handicapped have students with a vast array of medical issues and concerns. We want to provide the best and safest P.E. program for your child. The best way to accomplish this task is to have your physician make recommendations based on your child's medical condition. This provides the teacher with the information necessary to tailor a P.E. program that will be appropriate as well as safe for your child. ■

This section is intended to answer questions commonly raised by parents. Questions should be forwarded to Stephanie Brooks at the address on the back cover.



STATE SCHOOLS FOR SEVERELY HANDICAPPED
Missouri Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

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Web site: dese.mo.gov/divspeced/stateschools/

NOTE: If you have items of interest for the *Parent Focus*, please call 573-751-0706 (Missouri Relay 800-735-2966) or forward them to: Stephanie Brooks, State Schools for Severely Handicapped, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0480. E-mail: Stephanie.Brooks@dese.mo.gov